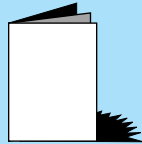
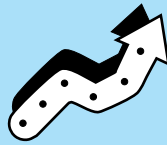
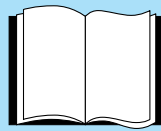
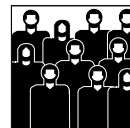


# COMPETITIVE PLACEMENT PLAN

GODDARD SPACE FLIGHT CENTER (GSFC)



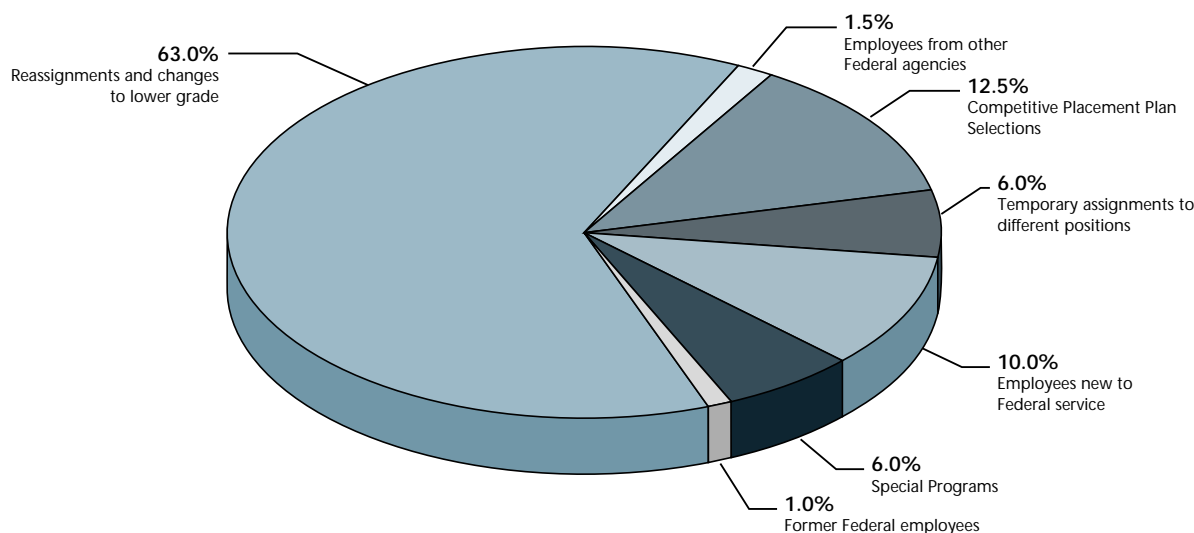
## FILLING VACANCIES



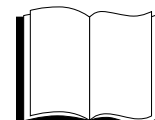
When there are positions that need to be filled on Center, managers may identify applicants through college recruiting efforts, Office of Personnel Management referrals, and paid advertising. Managers may also hire employees from other NASA Centers and Federal agencies. Sometimes vacancies are even filled by former employees who return to the government. When a vacancy occurs, employees may also be reassigned or temporarily assigned to a new position or selected from a special employment program (e.g., Student Educational Employment Program, Presidential Management Intern Program). Vacancies can also be filled through the NASA Competitive Placement Plan (CPP). As you can see, managers have a variety of options when filling vacancies.

The chart below shows how Center positions were filled from FY91 through FY93.

As illustrated, only a small percentage of positions are filled through the CPP process; however, it is the most widely known method on Center for filling vacancies. This brochure gives you information about the NASA Competitive Placement Plan. Commonly used terms are shown in bold face print and are defined in the Glossary of Terms at the end of this brochure.



## COMPETITIVE PLACEMENT PLAN



Each agency in the Federal competitive service is required to develop a **merit promotion program** which defines procedures for the selection and promotion of employees. This is to ensure a systematic means for selection and promotion based on merit and to provide Federal employees with an avenue for career progression or change while remaining in the Federal service.

As a NASA employee, your **merit promotion program** is the NASA Competitive Placement Plan. This plan applies to permanent Federal employees at the GSFC. The procedures and requirements outlined in the CPP do not guarantee selection or promotion. They do, however, require that selections be made fairly and that promotion practices support the merit principle of selection from among the best qualified applicants. Selections will be made without regard to political, religious, or labor organization affiliation or non-affiliation, marital status, race, color, sex, national origin, nondisqualifying disability, or age.

Each year, the Office of Human Resources (OHR) advertises approximately 200 vacancies through the CPP. Over the past 3 years, 60% of the vacancy announcements resulted in competitive selections. The other 40% were filled through other methods (e.g., transfers, details, etc.) or cancelled due to changes in program/project requirements.

So, how does this process work? This brochure explains:

- when **competitive procedures** must be used;
- what the areas of consideration are;
- how to apply for a vacancy; and,
- how applicants are evaluated.

## COMPETITIVE PROCEDURES

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In certain circumstances, vacancies must be advertised so that all employees have an opportunity to apply and be considered.

Applicants must be considered competitively for:

- assignment to positions with higher promotion potential;
- time limited promotions over 120 days;
- training required for promotion; and,
- transfer from another Federal agency to a higher graded position at the Center.

There are other situations for which employees are not required to compete, including:

- promotion when an employee's current position changes because of additional duties and responsibilities;
- promotion up to the promotion potential of the position;
- promotion following noncompetitive conversion provided by law;
- movement to a position having the same or lower promotion potential;
- promotions resulting from reclassification of a position;
- certain reduction-in-force situations; and,
- selection from a Reemployment Priority List.

## AREA OF CONSIDERATION

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The area of consideration specified on each vacancy announcement defines who may apply and receive consideration for the position. The area of consideration will vary depending upon the nature and level of the position, and the availability of high quality applicants in that particular area, as well as the ability to hire from outside the Center. The areas of consideration are:

CENTERWIDE: permanent Federal employees currently working at Goddard;

NASAWIDE: current permanent NASA employees ; and,

NASAWIDE AND OUTSIDE: current permanent federal employees and former federal employees eligible for reinstatement.

## POSTING OF VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS



Since it is important that all employees know about job opportunities, all CPP vacancy announcements are posted on official bulletin boards throughout the Center. In addition, an employment recording lists current vacancies and is available by calling (301) 286-5326 or (301) 286-7147 (TDD). The bulletin boards and employment recording are updated weekly.

## HOW TO APPLY FOR VACANCIES

You see a vacancy announcement that interests you on the vacancy board in your building. What should you do?

First, you should always get a copy of the vacancy announcement. You may obtain copies of vacancy announcements and applications in Building 1, Room 160, at Greenbelt and in Building F160 in the Personnel Office at Wallops. The vacancy announcement outlines:

- ✓ the duties of the position;
- ✓ the **Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSA's)** needed to perform the job;
- ✓ any special eligibility requirements; and,
- ✓ instructions on how to apply.

### Eligibility

You have a copy of the vacancy announcement, and you are definitely interested in the job. How do you know if you are eligible for the position?

The vacancy announcement will clearly specify if there are any special eligibility requirements. Otherwise, a basic rule of thumb is that one year of **specialized experience** at the next lower grade is required for most jobs. A **KSA** that is essential to perform the duties of a job may become a **basic qualifications requirement**. If so, this will be annotated on the vacancy announcement as a **selective factor**. Only applicants who possess the **specialized experience** and any **selective factors** are eligible for consideration.

The Center provides opportunities for upward mobility through the Gateway and Growth Opportunity (GO) programs. **Basic qualifications requirements** are waived for these positions.

### Preparing Your Application

If you think you meet the eligibility requirements, you should prepare your application. You must submit either an "Application for Federal Employment," SF-171, or the "Optional Application for Federal Employment," OF-612. Your application may be the first and only glimpse that a selecting official has of you. It should create a positive impression. As an applicant, you should always ensure that your application clearly and accurately reflects your knowledge, skills, abilities, education, training, and experience as they relate to the **KSA's** of the advertised position. You may also submit a narrative statement addressing how and to what degree you fulfill each of the **KSA's**.



## Applying for the Vacancy

You should submit your application along with a copy of the narrative summary of your most recent annual performance rating of record and your narrative statement addressing the **KSA's**. Both the vacancy announcement number and the grade(s) for which you are applying must be clearly indicated on the application. All required forms and any supplemental material must be received by the closing date of the vacancy announcement or postmarked by the closing date and received within 3 calendar days. You may deposit application packages after normal working hours in the Building 1, Room 160 drop slot.

## BASIC QUALIFICATIONS DETERMINATION

Have you ever wondered what happens between the time you apply and a selection is made?

After you apply for a vacancy, you will be informed in writing that your application has been received.

Your application is then reviewed to ensure that you meet the basic qualifications and any special eligibility requirements for the position for which you are applying. (Copies of qualifications standards used in this process may be reviewed in Room 160 at Greenbelt and Building F160 at Wallops.)

Applicants found not qualified are notified at this time. Applications of persons found basically qualified are further evaluated.



## EVALUATION OF APPLICANTS

Merit principles require that selections be made from among the best qualified applicants available. When there are 10 or fewer basically qualified applicants at a given grade level, an Office of Human Resources (OHR) representative screens the applicants against the **KSA's** to determine which applicants will be referred to the selecting official. When there are more than 10 basically qualified applicants at a given grade level, numerical rating and ranking is performed by an OHR representative or a panel to determine which applicants will be referred.

### Rating and Ranking

**Rating and ranking** may be performed by an OHR representative or panel. The **rating and ranking** process consists of:

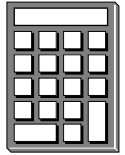
1. Assigning a numerical score for each individual **KSA** based on the relevant information provided in the application package. (The **KSA's** are derived from the major duties of the position through a job analysis conducted prior to posting the vacancy announcement.)
2. Combining the scores of the individual **KSA's** for an overall score. (When there is more than one rater, such as when a panel is conducted, the raters' scores are averaged for a single score.)
3. Ranking the applicants' overall scores in numerical order.

4. Comparing the overall scores to determine where there is a meaningful distinction between the scores. All applicants above the point of distinction are referred to the selecting official in alphabetical order. (The selecting official does not receive the numerical scores. Since the applicants referred are the best qualified, the scores are irrelevant. The selecting official may select any referred applicant.)

For example, if the applicants' scores were as follow:

50 50 48 44 43 43 36 35 32 30 27 25

then the meaningful distinction occurs between 43 and 36, since this is where the greatest difference occurs. The applicants with scores ranging between 43-50 will be referred to the selecting official in alphabetical order for consideration.



## Panels

You may wonder why a panel might be conducted. **Rating and ranking** by a panel often provides different perspectives and a broad base of expertise to identify the applicants that will be referred to the selecting official. The OHR, along with the selecting official, will determine when a panel is necessary. If **rating and ranking** is conducted by a panel, the panel will consist of at least 3 individuals approved by the OHR. At least one panel member must not be under the supervision of the selecting official and neither the selecting official nor an applicant for the position being filled may serve as a panel member. The raters must only consider the information submitted by the applicant. Therefore, you should not assume that others know what you do. You should give a clear and concise description of your qualifications in your application.

## REFERRAL OF APPLICANTS

Following **evaluation**, the OHR will issue to the selecting official a **Competitive Placement Certificate** with the names of the referred applicants in alphabetical order. All of the applicants listed on the certificate are eligible for selection. In some cases, more than one applicant may be selected if more than one vacancy is to be filled. The selecting official will select an applicant for the position by reviewing the applications. He or she may conduct interviews as well. The selecting official may also choose to cancel the vacancy announcement and may fill the position through reassignment, new hire, or other source.

## SELECTION

Managers must make selections in a timely manner and typically have a maximum of 90 days to do so. Upon selection, assignment to the new position will be made as soon as practicable.

## INFORMATION TO APPLICANTS

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All applicants will be notified as to the disposition of their applications. After a selection is made, eligible applicants will receive written notification stating:

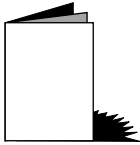
- whether they were referred for selection consideration;
- if not referred, the reason why; and,
- the name of the person who was selected.

If a vacancy is cancelled, you will be notified in writing of the reason for cancellation. There are many reasons why a vacancy may be cancelled: project/program changes, unexpected hiring freezes, or selection from another source.

## YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

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The Center depends on you to compete for vacancies as they become available. To ensure consideration for vacancies while on leave or an extended absence, you may request that your supervisor submit your application package for you during your absence. You should provide your application, narrative summary of your most recent annual performance rating of record, and any other relevant information to your supervisor before you go on leave or take an extended absence.



## FURTHER INFORMATION

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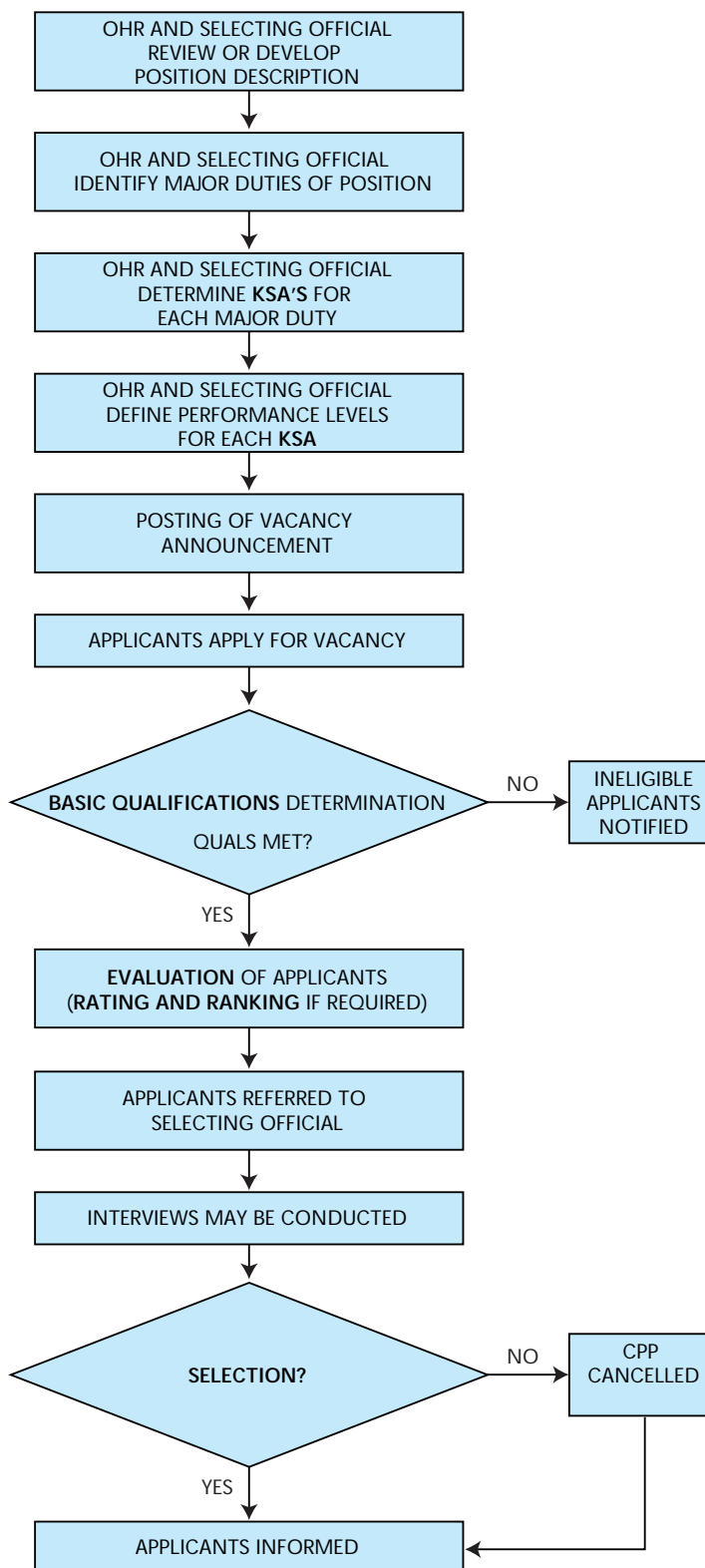
If you want more detailed information about the Agency's Competitive Placement Plan, you may request a copy of the NASA Handbook (NHB 3335.1C). Copies of the handbook are available in the Office of Human Resources located in Building 1, Room 160. Employees at the Wallops Flight Facility may obtain copies in the Personnel Office, Building F160. Additionally, bargaining unit members should consult their collective bargaining agreements for additional information.

Any questions concerning the CPP or qualifications should be directed to an OHR representative. The OHR representative is also available to provide guidance on how to complete an application. Courses are also conducted periodically to answer questions and give guidance on this process. Check the Annual Training Calendar for dates. For information about vacancies at Greenbelt, call (301) 286-7918 and for vacancies at Wallops call (804) 824-1411.

The Competitive Placement Plan is designed to provide career opportunities. It is important that employees remember that CPP selections are to be made fairly and from among the best qualified applicants available. If you have any concerns about treatment received under the CPP, you are encouraged to discuss them with an OHR representative. Non-selection, itself, is not a basis for a complaint or grievance. If you feel you have been treated unfairly due to discrimination, you should contact the Equal Opportunity Programs Office.

## CPP PROCESS

The following flow chart provides an overview of the CPP process.





## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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**BASIC QUALIFICATIONS REQUIREMENTS:** Minimum qualifications required for a position as prescribed by NASA or the Office of Personnel Management.

**COMPETITIVE PLACEMENT CERTIFICATE:** A list of referred applicants for a specific vacancy as identified through the competitive placement procedures.

**COMPETITIVE PROCEDURES:** A framework for selecting the best qualified applicants available.

**EVALUATION:** The process of assessing the degree to which each applicant possesses the **KSA's** essential for satisfactory performance of the position.

**KNOWLEDGE, SKILL, AND ABILITY (KSA's):** Factors that are needed to perform the job and are used to rate applicants for the position.

**MERIT PROMOTION PROGRAM:** A program, such as the NASA Competitive Placement Plan, which describes the systematic means for selection and promotion based on fair and open competition.

**RATING AND RANKING:** A method of indicating the relative degree to which applicants meet the **KSA's** identified in a vacancy announcement.

**SELECTIVE FACTOR:** A **knowledge, skill or ability** which is essential to perform the duties of the job. Selective factors become part of the **basic qualifications requirement**.

**SPECIALIZED EXPERIENCE:** Experience that has equipped the applicant with **KSA's** to successfully perform the duties of the position. Most positions require 1 year of specialized experience at the next lower grade.

